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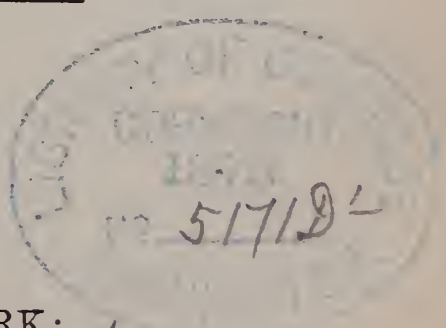
THE CHAIR-PULPIT;

OR,

Six Little Sermons for Little Hearers.

By NEIL FOREST.



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INTRODUCTORY.

NEIL FOREST is a preacher, and yet she never preaches in the ordinary way. She does not go into the church-pulpits, but on Sabbath morning sits in the pew with her children. In the evening, however, when the little ones gather about her easy-chair at home, she does preach sweet little sermons, so simple that the smallest of the home-congregation can understand her, and so practical that all through the week they recall her words of illustration and instruction. Says Minnie, the home pet, "Mamma isn't a church-preacher,

she's a home-preacher; she doesn't go into the church-pulpit, but preaches from her chair-pulpit."

Here are some of her sermons. They are wise and good, and don't seem like "real dry sermons" at all.

The Editor recommends them to young readers, and suggests that they may be "preached over again" in many a home to the profit of little people.

J. H. V.

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THE

CHAIR-PULPIT.

I.

MY PUZZLE.

WHEN I was little, I was much puzzled to know how I could keep God's Commandments. It seemed to me they were all made for grown-up people. But I had learned in the Bible that "even a child is known by his doings." So I saw that I must do my best, and as I really wanted to serve God, but did not know how, I was often perplexed and anxious.

I will tell you how I used to feel. My greatest trouble was about Sunday. I understood well enough the commandment about keeping it holy. But how was I to do so? I had been told that I ought to love it, but I had to confess to myself that I did not. It was a very long, hard day to me, and I was sorry when it came and glad when it was over. Once my teacher at school asked all my class which day of the week we loved the best. We all answered together, "Saturday! because it's a holiday!"

This was truthful, but not satisfactory, for she expected us to say Sunday. I think it was much better for us to speak the truth, even if it was unexpected. But I was sorry to think I could not say Sunday. I wanted to love Sunday. I thought

to myself, "I would if I could." I remembered that the commandment was to keep the Sabbath day holy, and nothing was said about loving it, which was a comfort to me; for if I had been forced to love it, I should have thought I was breaking the commandment. For I felt sure I never could love it while I was little, and had to sit still in church and behave so very well, and not play, nor run races, nor read fairy stories. I used to go to church and learn hymns, and read my Bible; but, O, how long the day was to me!

We always had a very good breakfast Sunday mornings, and I was allowed a cup of weak coffee, which was a great treat. This was pleasant, but it did not last long. After breakfast, I used to look

out of the front window into the street and watch the people hurrying past to church. Bridget, our cook, would come out hastily from the area and start off on a quick, short trot, fearful of being late. She always wore her best green dress, with her blue bonnet, and her red plaid shawl turned right side out. On week-days the shawl was always worn wrong side out, and this was in order to keep it fresh for Sunday. I often wished I could be turned for Sunday, like the shawl. But it seemed to me I was brighter and better all the week than I ever was on Sunday. I felt wrong side out all day long.

In church I tried to follow the service, and when the minister read any of the stories out of the Bible I loved to listen;

but often he read what I could not understand, and then I tried to amuse myself by thinking.

I wondered if the other children in church liked it any better than I did. I wondered why the old gentleman who sat in front of me tied his scanty gray hair with a little bit of white thread and brushed it all forward toward his forehead. Did he think it concealed the fact that he was bald? Well, it didn't! Any one could see that he was bald just as well as not! I wondered if the pretty girl who sat next to him (and who was his daughter) tied it for him, or maybe the old lady, his wife, did. Why didn't they tell him it was no use?

The pretty girl wore pink roses in her bonnet, and her hair-pins always fell out

at some time during the service. I used to watch them gradually working loose in her thick brown braids until they dropped, sometimes into her pew and sometimes into ours. She wore tinkling gold earrings and pretty ribbons, and I liked to look at her, but thought she was a careless girl, and wondered why the old lady didn't scold her and make her fasten her hair-pins better. Then I would be ashamed of my idle thoughts and think, "This is no way to keep the Sabbath day holy."

I used to try and sing when the choir did, until the old lady who sat behind me tapped me on the shoulder and said, "'Sh—'sh." Then I knew I had been singing incorrectly, but I thought "It is not my fault; I sing the tune right, but

the rest of them put in so many little *curlykews* they put me out." So I was quite discouraged, and gave it up.

The sermon was a great trial to me. I tried to keep quiet and listen, but I never did understand it. So I would begin to think again. "Suppose I had a hundred dollars, how would I spend it?" Sometimes I felt quite worldly, and would lay it all out in gold earrings and pretty ribbons and handsome dresses for my mother, and magnificent horses and watches and diamond studs for my father. (For I thought a hundred dollars could buy every thing.)

At other times I would devote it to the missionary cause; but I generally preferred to see the results of my generosity, and fancied nice warm shawls for the

poor colored women who sat all by themselves in one corner, or toys for the charity children, or dresses for the sexton's wife and the servants at home.

I found so many ways of spending it that I kept tolerably quiet through the long sermon. But, after these glorious imaginings, how pitiful it seemed to put only one cent into the plate when it was handed to me. Yet one cent was one third of my weekly income.

How glad I was when the minister pronounced the blessing! Not because of the blessing—I felt that *I* had nothing to do with that, because I had been naughty and inattentive—but because church was over, and I could stretch my tired limbs, that were *so* tired.

Do you think I was naughty? Have

you ever felt as I did? I believe you have, for children are very much alike. Now that I am older I do not think I was naughty. I know how very hard it is for little ones to sit still so long and listen to what they cannot understand.

Perhaps you would like to ask, "Then what is the use of making us go to church while we are little?" I will tell you one reason. Because you acquire the habit of going, which, if you neglect while you are young, you will hardly be able to take up when you are old. I do not say it would be impossible, but I have always noticed that the steady church-goers are those who were taught to go as little children.

Perhaps you will not altogether believe me when I say, if you always go to church

while you are little you will grow to love it, and never want to stay away when you are older. Don't you believe me? I think that is so. At any rate, it was so with me, and I will tell you how I found it out.

When I was nearly twelve years old I was sent, for the summer, to a very lovely, but also very lonely, country place where there was no church. At first I thought I should like this, but I soon found out my mistake. When Sunday came and there was no church-bell ringing, and nobody put on a Sunday dress, and there was no difference between that morning and any other, I began to feel uncomfortable. Those around me did just what they were in the habit of doing on week-days; for, if there is no church to go to,

people soon forget to keep the Sabbath day holy. I was at liberty to do as I chose, but I did not enjoy it. Something within me said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." I took my Bible and my hymn-book and walked away to a little brook, and sat down under the shady trees and tried to read. I did read quite a long time, and then went back to the house again and found it was only ten o'clock! Why, I thought it was afternoon, the time had seemed so long. It was almost church-time at home. O how I wished I could be there! I thought how pleasant it was at home on Sunday mornings, when I got myself ready and went to church with my parents; and I wondered why I had ever thought it dull and the day long. It was a great deal

duller and longer here! I would have given a great deal then to be able to go to church. I missed it. I felt homesick and dreary. O how hard it seemed to me to keep that Sabbath holy! I wanted to hear our minister's voice, reading and praying, and the congregation singing! I felt as if I was at the very ends of the earth; and although I had been four days in the place, without one homesick feeling, now that this Sunday had come, which was no Sunday to me, I felt wretched, and longed for home and for church.

I did not know before that I had loved church; I began to think now that I did. Perhaps some of you want to say, "Why didn't you play and swing, and have a good time, since nobody hindered you?"

O! dear children, when once we know what is good, we cannot love any thing else. Suppose instead of your nice warm clothing you had been brought up to wear thin, torn, dirty clothes; instead of your pleasant, bright, warm rooms, you had spent your life in cold, dark, dreary hovels; instead of loving friends, and refined associations, you had only been used to hard, coarse, brutal treatment, and seen only wickedness and vice! Would you be happy? No indeed! You would be wretched, though *how* wretched you might not know, not being used to any thing better.

But suppose that you were taken *now* from your lovely homes and placed among such scenes, and, knowing what it is to be warm, should always be cold; never

before having felt hunger, should now almost starve; always accustomed to kind words, should now be beaten and scolded? Would not that be too dreadful even to think about? Would not the memory of all you had enjoyed make your condition seem ten times harder than if you had never known better? I think so. You are accustomed to what is good, and cannot like what is not so.

Now it is exactly so with our souls. When we have been taught to worship God, and are accustomed to go to his house; when we have heard the blessed words of love, and promises of happiness read from the Bible; when we have grown familiar with the songs, the prayers, and the customs of a Christian congregation, we cannot be contented with the silly

book, the foolish words of idle people, the wicked jests, the wild song, the disregard of God's day.

I had been taught better, therefore I could not play on Sunday, though I was told I might. I knew what was holy, I could not choose what was not. If I had stayed for a long time in that lonely place, I dare say I should have become quite used to living without the Sabbath; indeed, I have no doubt it would have come disagreeable to me to bear the restraint of church, and probably, little by little, I should have lost my tenderness of conscience, and forgotten entirely to keep the Sabbath day holy. But would I have been happier? No indeed!

Would you be happy if you *got used* to freezing and starving? There is such a

thing as getting used to hardships. The poor children we often see in the streets are in a manner used to their wretched lives. But are they happy? I'm afraid not, indeed!

In the same way, if you neglect the habit of church-going, you lose your relish for it. Your soul becomes dull. But if you go constantly, your soul becomes active, you enjoy it, and after awhile cannot willingly stay away.

Now, children, which is best, a good habit or a bad one? I think you will all agree with me and answer "a good one." If so, then you see one reason for going to church. Even if you do not understand much of the service.

Let me tell you something that perhaps you have never thought about. Every

time you conquer your impatience in church you are really and truly serving God. Perhaps you do not think it is doing much to sit still, and not pull your mamma's dress and say, "When will church be over?" But it is doing a great deal. If you can keep quiet because you know you are in God's house, and it pleases him to be worshiped earnestly, then you are truly worshiping him, even if you have not understood a single word. I do not suppose the little children whom the dear Lord took in his arms and blessed knew that they were coming to God, when their mothers brought them. They were very little, only old enough to know they must obey their parents and come when they were called. Yet because they did this they

were blessed. When you sit still and are patient, you are doing as much as you know how to do, and Jesus will bless you.

Little by little, and only as you can learn easily, his Holy Spirit will teach your hearts, so that you shall understand more and more of his love. And the more you learn, the more you will love him. You will love God's house and God's words, you will love to sing his praise and to pray to him; you will love God's day; yes you will, though you do not think so now, and God will love you forever and forever. For this is written in the Bible:

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love."

II.

LOVING-KINDNESS.

"BE ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you."

Here is a text that seems to be the very one for children to learn. Do you want to know why I think so? Because children have a great many little troubles of their own, and they generally come from a want of forgiveness, or because those around them are not always tender-hearted and kind.

Did you ever accidentally tread on your big brother's toe, and hear him

say, "Go along! you little awkward thing, you've hurt me dreadfully; you're always in the way?" Were you ever very much interested in a new story book, while your little sister kept teasing you all the time? Did you shut your book and answer her gently, or did you say, "Can't you hush up, you little plague?" If these things have ever happened to you, then you know what I mean. How did you feel when your brother was cross to you? Did you like it? How did your little sister feel when you were cross to her? Did *she* like it?

Perhaps you say, "*I* don't care!" Ah! but you do care! How do I know? Because, once upon a time, a long while ago, I was a child myself, and I remember just how I used to feel when

any one was cross to me. I used to say I didn't care, but I did, for way down in the bottom of my heart there was a little ache. O yes! I cared a great deal, and so do you.

I had a story book about Charlie Seymour, a little boy who had to choose which of two aunts he would live with. One aunt was very rich, and gave him all he wanted, but she was cross; and the other aunt was poor, and had to deny him a great many things he wanted, but she was kind. And he chose to live with her and be poor, because he was so much happier with her. All the playthings in the world could not make him happy while he was scolded so much; but he could be as cheery as possible without toys when he was kindly and

gently treated. I was always glad he went with the kind aunt. You may be very sure we are all a great deal happier when those around us are tender-hearted, forgiving, and kind.

Once there was a very wise man, who thought a great deal. A friend came to him one day and asked why he was so sad. "There are a million people in this city," said he, "and all of them are rascals." This was so very sad that the friend began to get melancholy too. But he had one thought, and he thought it out loud, "Be a saint yourself," said he, "and then, at least, there will be one rascal the less in the city."

Now I have no doubt, as you read about unkind people, you can remember a great many who are cross. But never

mind about them. Be kind yourself, and there will be one cross-patch the less in this world.

I wonder how many ways there are of being unkind! I have never counted. But I think if we began to count all our fingers, thumbs and all, backward and forward, over and over again, we could not begin to add that sum; and O what a dreary, dreadful sum it would be! Worse than any in the arithmetic book, though they are quite bad enough.

So we will not try to do that. But we will begin another sum. It's just as long, but a great deal pleasanter. There are just as many ways of being kind as there are of being unkind.

If we begin now, and try to find out one or two of these ways, it will be a good

thing to do for Sunday. I have already spoken of one way. To be patient, is to be kind. It is not easy to be patient. When we are feeling a little sick, or a little sad, or when we are very much interested in a play or a book, or even when we are studying our lessons, it is very trying to be interrupted constantly. It seems, sometimes, as if we *must* say something sharp. But if we don't, and if we can just keep our temper down, and speak gently, then we have obeyed this commandment in the Bible—to be kind.

To learn to feel sorry for the troubles of others is to be kind. Almost every body has some little thing or other that troubles him, and if he can tell it to a dear, loving friend, it makes him a great

deal happier. If you have been unjustly treated by somebody, or if you missed in your lesson at school, or if you have a toothache, does it not make you feel better to tell somebody and get petted, and have him love you and comfort you, and say he is sorry for you? Even if people cannot help you any other way, it is pleasant to know they would if they could.

Now sometimes when we have such troubles ourselves, they seem like very great ones; but when other people have them, they seem like very trifling affairs. So it is always well to stop and think, "How do I feel when this happens to me?" When you remember how you felt, then go and say loving words to your friends. Say just what you would like to have said to you. There are some

troubles that can't be cured. I knew a dear little boy who had the hip disease. Nobody could cure him. But O, how much happier his short life was, because of the loving-kindness of a dear aunt, and the gentle, kind words of a few children who felt sorry for him!

A word of love is sometimes the *only* comfort one can find; but it is a very great comfort. So, you see, to feel for others is to be kind. This is being tender-hearted, too.

There is another way of being kind. Never make fun of any body. It's a very good rule to laugh *with* others, but never laugh *at* them. I have known children who thought they were bright when they ridiculed others. But I think that's a very poor kind of fun indeed; and I don't

believe any good, hearty, merry laughter ever cáme yet from such fun.

I have known a poor Irish servant-girl made very wretched by ridicule from children. She came to America all alone, to get a living, and she tried to send money home to her old mother, who was bitterly poor. She did not know how to work in the way servants do in America, but she was willing and anxious to learn. She wanted to please, and when she made mistakes she tried hard to find out the right way, so as not to dò so again. But the children in the house made fun of her, and laughed and joked about her, and never stopped to think that what they called fun was great pain to her. Poor girl! Her face would grow as red as a rose, and great tears would stand in her

eyes, but the children did not see this. They might have seen it, but they had not learned to be kind and tender-hearted.

Now don't you suppose if they had been kind to her she would have gone on trying harder and harder to please them, and she would have been happy as she worked, and her face would be bright, and she would have written home cheerfully to her old mother? But instead of this she was first very sad, and when she wrote home she said in her letter:

"It's grievin' and frettin' I am, dear mother; I'm lonely and forlorn in this New World."

How these sad words made her mother's heart ache, far away in Ireland, where she could not comfort her poor lonely

child. To the children she was "Greenhorn Biddy;" but to her mother she was a poor lonely child in a strange land, with no one to say a kind word to her. So there were two sad hearts, instead of two happy ones, and all because of a few little children who had not learned to be kind.

Worse than this! poor Biddy got discouraged. Every body called her stupid, every body ridiculed her, and, even when she did her best, no one seemed pleased. So after awhile she grew sulky and cross; and instead of a happy, nice girl, Biddy became sullen and disagreeable. Think what those children did with their wicked ridicule.

I knew two little Spanish girls who had to leave school because the other girls in

their class made fun of their bonnets. They came to school, hoping to find friends, and ready to love all their schoolfellows. But they were sensitive and shy, and were made so wretched by the unkind ridicule of their class that their parents took them away. I dare say all those children excused themselves by saying, "Why! we were only in fun; we didn't think." Ah! but they ought to have thought. To be thoughtful is to be kind.

I wish I had time to tell you a great many other ways of being kind and tenderhearted; but as I have not, I will mention just one more. This is a very important one: Never to think evil. Very little children are not apt to think evil of each other; it is a fault that comes with years,

but it comes so very soon that it is well to guard against it.

A little girl was asked to lend a book to another little girl. She colored and said, "I can't, but I would like to." The one who asked turned away and said, "Just like her; stingy girl, she's always mean about her things!"

Now that was thinking evil. The child spoke the truth when she said she could not lend the book, for her mother had told her not to do so. It made her sorry to refuse her friend, but she had to obey her mother.

A boy was hissed at in school because he said he could not give a dollar to the subscription that his class had made to present their teacher with a silver pitcher at Christmas. The boys called him mean.

They said he was a miser, and tormented him dreadfully about it. The truth was, that he was a brave boy. He knew how hard his parents worked that he might be respectably educated; he knew that if he gave that dollar his mother would save it out of something she needed for herself, for they were really poor. He preferred bearing the ridicule of his class to seeing his mother deny herself; but O! how it hurt this generous child to be called a *miser*, to be so misjudged by those he had thought were his friends. The trouble was, that they thought evil of him. If we could only see into each other's hearts, how much kinder we should all be. It is so much better to think well of our friends. Did you ever put on green spectacles? How green

every thing is through them! If you get the habit of thinking evil, every body looks hateful and unlovely. Don't wear dark spectacles when you look at your friends. Use the kind, clear eyes that come from the Lord, and all the world will be bright to you. To think no evil is the very greatest kindness.

Have you ever heard of the Eleventh Commandment? I dare say you know it. It was given us by our dear Lord Jesus just before he died. He said, "A new commandment I gave unto you, That ye love one another." If you read your Bible carefully, you will see that Jesus said this very often just before he died. I think he knew what it was to live without love in this world. I think he knew how happy a place the world would be

if we all loved each other; how dreary a place it was without love. He felt sorry for us. He was going back to heaven, and *we* could never see him on earth, nor hear his loving words, and know that Love itself was with us. So he gave us this commandment, "That ye love one another;" and then he added, "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

O what an easy thing it ought to be to love one another! Think what a glorious thing it is to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and to live with him hereafter in heaven! If we are his disciples we shall do this. What an easy thing it is we are told to do to prove ourselves his disciples—only to love one another! It should be easy, surely. If it is not, it is

because we are not yet like our loving Lord. But we will try to be, wont we, little ones? And the nearer we draw to him, the easier it will be for us to obey his commandment, and we shall become kind and tender-hearted, and we shall find what comfort and peace there is in loving one another.

III.

FAITH AND PRAYER.

I ONCE knew a little girl who had been told that if she prayed to God she would receive whatever she asked for. So she prayed night after night for a new doll's head. This was what she most wanted, for her dear doll had been without a head for a month, and she lay in her cradle with her best ruffled night-gown on, her hands crossed over her breast; but as she had no head, of course she could not be interesting in any way. The little girl could not even play she was dead, because, as she said, "Even dead people have heads."

So she was very unhappy about her doll, and as nobody gave her a new head, or money with which to buy one, she thought she would pray to God, and see if it was true that he would send her whatever she asked for. Night after night she prayed, "Please give my dolly a new head," and yet the next morning there lay the poor doll still headless in her cradle.

So after awhile she became discouraged, and said, "It isn't true that God hears us when we pray, because I've asked him over and over again, and I don't get what I want. I wont pray any more for any thing."

Now this little girl had a dear aunt, who happened to hear her say this, and she bought her doll a beautiful new head

with real hair, which made the child very happy, and I'm sure you are glad to know that she was so, and perhaps you will be more interested in hearing about the doll than in what I am going to tell you. But I want you to read what I have to say, because, although it is not a story, you may perhaps like it, and children can think as well as grown people, and do not need story books all the time.

A little child's idea of prayer is, "I shall have just what I want." This is not the right idea. I do not mean that it is wicked; O no, it is only incorrect. A little child cannot understand much more than its own wishes. But as it grows older, it reasons in this way:

"I have been told to pray to God for what I want; I have prayed, and I havent

got it. Is that because I didn't pray in the right way, or because God does not hear me? If I don't pray right, I wish I knew how; it would be so nice to have all I want." And then the little mind wanders off to fairy tales, and remembers about the purse of Fortunatus, and the beautiful dress and coach of Cinderella, and all the lovely things that happened in those stories to people who only had to wish for them. And this, they think, is what ought to happen to them if they pray.

But, children, this is not the way to think about prayer. We are not princes and princesses in a fairy tale, with fairy godmothers who fly about with wands, and sometimes turn us into swans, and sometimes into toads, just as they please,

and load us with beautiful presents, or keep us in dark dungeons. No, indeed! I'll tell you what we are, and you will see how different a thing real life is from life in a fairy story.

We are the dearly-loved children of an Almighty God. The great God who made heaven and earth, who knows every thing, who is every-where, whose will is law for all things, whose power is supreme, whose works are wonderful beyond all telling, this Almighty God calls us his children; he watches over us, and protects us, gives us his love before we ask for it, or even know about it, and, having placed us in this world, promises to give us all we *need* (not all we *want*) if we will love him and try to serve him.

But God does not promise us that all

our wishes shall be granted. We often wish for very foolish things, and for things that are not good for us, which, if they were given to us, would make us very unhappy.

And we often have very idle and selfish wishes. A child who wants to go on a picnic wishes for a bright sunny day, and perhaps the child's father longs for a pouring rain to water his garden, which is scorching in the heat. Suppose both of them prayed to God, one for sun, the other for rain; of course one would be disappointed, and probably impatient, or discouraged, and might say, "If that's all I get by praying I wont pray again." And the one who was pleased might feel: "God loves *me* the best, because he granted *my* prayer."

Don't you see how selfish this would be, and how dangerous, because the very next time they prayed and were disappointed they would think that God had forgotten them, or was angry with them, and had not granted their prayer for this reason. So all the time *somebody* would be either too much depressed or too much elated, and our minds would be in confusion constantly.

Now let us see if we can find out what prayer ought to be. We will look at the life and prayers of our Saviour, for he is our example in all things. We know how little he had of this world's pleasure. He was poor, he was homeless, he was often hungry, often sad. And yet we know that he often prayed, for the Bible says so. He was in the habit of leaving

his disciples and going away all alone to pray. We must remember that he was God's own dear Son, and that God would surely answer his prayers. So it must be that our dear Lord never prayed for what would make him happy and comfortable in this world; his prayers must have been for something very different.

When his disciples asked him to teach them to pray he did, and the prayer he gave is the one we call the Lord's Prayer, and little children often call it "Our Father." You all know it, and can repeat it, I have no doubt. It is written in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and is part of the Sermon on the Mount. What does this prayer ask for? Does it say, "Give me all I want?" "Let me have every thing I ask for?" No, indeed!

It does ask God to give us what we *need.* We need daily bread, and it asks for daily bread, which means all that is necessary for us to keep us alive. But it does *not* ask for more than this. This was all that Jesus had. Daily bread was enough for the Son of God when he was on earth, surely it should be enough for us. We may pray to God to give us what we *need.*

All the rest of the prayer is asking for things that will help to make us holy while we live on earth, and fit to live in heaven when we die. Then there must be the right things to pray for. There is another sentence in it which says:

"Thy will be done."

What does this mean? Why, that no matter what *we* want, if God thinks it is

best for us to be without it, it *is* best. We would rather that God, who is so loving to us should do just what he sees best for us whether we want it or not. It was in this way St. Paul prayed. He had something the matter with him, something that distressed him, I do not know what; some have thought that his eyes were afflicted; but whatever it was, it caused him very great sorrow and pain. He says that he prayed to God three times that this pain should be taken away from him. But God did not grant that prayer, even to St. Paul, who was a good and holy man. This was not because God did not love St. Paul, for he did love him, and had changed him from being a wicked man into one of the noblest and best of men that ever lived.

Perhaps you think that God would have answered his prayer, and taken away his pain. But no! For some reason, which God only knew, it was best for him to bear that sorrow, and he let him bear it, and St. Paul stopped praying to have it taken away, because he saw it was God's will that he should suffer from it. God's grace was sufficient for him. God gave him strength to be patient under the suffering, and that was enough for St. Paul, who remembered that part of the Lord's Prayer which said, "Thy will be done." St. Paul was so sure of God's love that he was willing to have just what God saw best to send him, whether it was sorrow or joy. He knew God was right, and he submitted to his trial.

I think if any little children who are

sick, or who have some great affliction, like deafness, or lameness, or blindness, hear this about St. Paul, it might help them to bear their trouble. If they can feel that God loves them truly and tenderly, they will be willing to believe that it is the best for them to suffer if it is God's will they should. There is some good reason for it, or God would not have permitted it. So instead of praying, "Take away this pain," the better prayer would be, "Give me grace and strength to bear it, and Thy will be done."

But perhaps some of you will think, "I don't like that at all. I don't want to bear pain. I want to have my own way, and to be happy all the time, and have nothing but what is good and pleasant."

Of course this is what we all want, but this is not what is best for us. Did you ever see a baby cry to put its hand into the flame of a candle? I have. My own little baby cried once for that very thing. Suppose I had let him burn himself, would it have been kind of me? And would it have made baby any happier? He cried to do it, but how much harder he would have cried if I had let him. Those poor little blistered fingers would have hurt him for days. To be sure he would have learned a lesson; he never would have touched fire again; but then I loved my baby too much to want to have him learn this lesson by being hurt. Every one of his dear little pink fat fingers I loved, I couldn't bear to think of their being burned, and I took him

away from the candle, even though he cried very, very hard, because I wouldn't let him have his own way.

Don't you think we should all be very much like that baby if we insisted on having our own way? Suppose we longed and longed for something which God *knew* would hurt us. Suppose we prayed and prayed for it, and fretted and mourned and grew gloomy and sad because it was not granted! If God *did* grant it, it might be the very thing that would make us wretched; or, if it even seemed to make us happier now, it might keep us from growing holy and fit for heaven.

We live here on this earth a very little while, and then we go to another world forever and forever. Which is best, to have what will make us comfortable now,

or what will make us happy forever? We cannot have the best of both worlds. This one is very lovely, very sunny, and very sweet; but the one to come is lovelier, sunnier, and sweeter. I think if we only knew what was best for us, we should ask God to give us now just what would make us the most fit for the world to come. This is what Jesus taught us to pray. And this is what he prayed.

Shall we dare to say, "*My* will be done," when Jesus has taught us to say, "*Thy* will be done?" We know how our Saviour prayed when he was in great agony in the garden, just before he died that cruel death. "If it be possible," he prayed, "let this cup pass from me." Jesus knew all he must suffer, and he prayed to God that, if it were possible,

the great agony might be spared. But see what comes after this in his prayer. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And it was God's will that he should suffer, and he suffered. But after his prayer and agony, an angel came and strengthened him, and he was strong to do God's will.

Now, dear children, this is what I think about prayer. It is not given to us to get just the good things we want on earth, but to teach us how to do without them. It is not a way to escape evil, but a way which makes us strong to meet evil.

Do you say, "If I believe this, then I don't care to pray? If I can't have what I want, I wont ask for any thing?"

You may not have what you *want*, but you *will* have what is best for you. Is

not that a great deal? Is it not *every thing?*

A little one left in a darkened room to sleep alone sometimes becomes frightened and cries for its mother. It is lonely and afraid, though there is nothing to fear. It calls, and the mother, hearing the dear little voice, hurries to it, and then with light and mamma the little one smiles, forgets all its fears, and, nestled close in those loving arms, sleeps quietly.

Dear little ones, if ever the world looks dark to you, and you get frightened and lonely, and almost forget the loving protector watching over you, call, call loudly. And God will give his light, the loving Lord will clasp you closely, and you shall rest sweetly, smiling to know that "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

IV.

FEARING GOD.

I DO not know how it came to pass, but when I was very little I was afraid of God. Having been told to fear God, I understood that I ought to be afraid of him. This was a childish mistake, but it made me suffer, so I shall tell you about it, in case you feel so too, and I want you to understand the matter better than I did.

I had learned the text, "Fear God and keep his commandments." This was the way in which I reasoned: "God can do any thing he likes; he can send me to hell, he can kill me in one moment if he

wants to. I wonder if he will! I'm very naughty very often. I get angry easily, and when I am so I strike and scream. O yes! I'm a very bad child, and if God chose he could punish me. I'm dreadfully afraid of him!"

Was not this a very wrong way of thinking about God, who is our loving Father, and who loves us all so much more than even our earthly parents do? I wonder that I ever felt so! And if I had only had the courage to tell my parents, I do not doubt they would have taught me better. But I was timid, and never told any body. It may be there are some little ones who have felt just as I did, and if so, this chapter is written to them.

I found out my mistake after awhile.

I was reading in my Bible one day, and I came to these verses in the fourth chapter of the First Epistle of St. John: "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us."

I read these verses over and over again, and thought, "Then if that is so, I ought not to be afraid of God. It certainly says very plainly that I should love God, and I can't love him if I'm afraid of him. It is true enough that fear hath torment; it is horrible to feel afraid all the time. What does it all mean? If I'm to fear God, and yet love him too, and if I cannot love him because I'm afraid of him,

what *am* I to do? So I puzzled over it a great while. The last verse helped me. "Why," I suddenly thought, "if God loves us before we love him, it may be that he loves me *now*." As soon as I thought that I was happier. I had never supposed that God really and truly loved *me*, a little foolish child, who was of no kind of importance in the world.

An ant hill was always a great source of amusement to me. I loved to watch the little black things running about. They seemed so busy about nothing at all, yet I had heard that they all worked with an object, but as I could not understand what it was they did, sometimes I used to get provoked with them.

"They are stupid; they can't sing like birds, nor are they pretty like butterflies,"

I would say to myself. "They are useless little black spots; suppose I put my foot on them and kill them. Or suppose I just kill one. One ant isn't worth any thing." (However, I never did this.)

Now I fancied that the world must look just like an ant heap from heaven, and all the people who went fussing about in it just like ants. It couldn't make much difference what became of them, and certainly one little black spot like *me* was of no possible value, it might just as well be killed as not.

It was because I thought God felt to me as I did to the ant that I was afraid of him. But just as soon as I began to think that God *loved* me, why that altered the case at once! If he did, then I must be of some use; I must be worth something.

I was more than a black spot on the surface of the earth.

Then it all came into my mind suddenly, all I had been told about Christ's death. It was because God loved us so that Jesus had come to save us from sin; Jesus, who was God himself, had loved us so much that he had died for us. The God I had been so afraid of had given his own dear Son to die for *me*, that I need not die!

If you have ever seen any one kindle a fire you know how it is done. The paper and the wood and the coal are all laid, then the match is put to it, and, very slowly, a little thin curl of blue smoke rises; another second and more smoke comes, and more and more as the wood kindles; then suddenly a bright, clear

flame darts up, at first just one flash, then another, and presently the whole bursts into flame, bright, warm, and beautiful. This was the way it had been with my heart. All the time I was afraid of God, it was as though my heart were full of sour, suffocating smoke, that brought tears to my eyes, but no light or warmth. The moment the knowledge of God's love entered it was like the first bright flash, and as I thought more and more about it, and remembered about Christ the Redeemer, the fire spread, till my whole heart flowed. I found at last that to fear God was not to be afraid of him.

To fear God means to be afraid of sin. Afraid of doing any thing which may separate us from him. In heaven all are pure, and good, and holy. Nothing sin-

ful can live near God. There will be no sinners in heaven. But thousands and thousands of souls will be there, that were all sinners once.

Perhaps you would like to ask how they could get there. Did they do any thing that was very good to make God forgive their sins? They did this: They believed that God loved them; they knew that Jesus, his Son, died to save them, and they asked God, for his dear sake, to forgive them. That was enough. Only to ask, only to love! All the glories and joys of heaven to be had for love, and for the asking!

If you wanted any thing very much, and knew your mamma would give it to you if you asked her, would you hesitate long? Would you be *afraid* of her? I

think not, indeed! God loves you very much more than your mamma does. Are you afraid of him? If you love your parents you do not want to grieve them, you would rather try to please them. That is fearing them, it is fearing to displease them, not because they might perhaps punish you, but because you love them too much to make them sad.

In heathen countries the people do not know about God and his love. They pray to idols, which are images made of wood or stone. They are dreadfully afraid of these idols, and do horrible things to please them. Sometimes they kill their little children, sometimes they cut themselves with knives, and they think that is what these idols like.

I should think they might be afraid of

such a god! They have one dreadful image called Juggernaut, and sometimes they put this idol on a heavy cart and draw it about. Then those who want to please Juggernaut throw themselves down before it, and the great wheels go over their bodies and crush them. O what a dreadful thing it is to worship such a god as that! I do not wonder they are afraid.

But in this country we know better, and so for us to feel so to our God, who is so pitiful, loving, and kind to us, is not worshiping him. It is being like the heathen who knows no better.

"But," perhaps some of you will say, "God will punish us if we are bad, and that's what we are afraid of." This is hard to explain to you, but I will try.

God does not *want* to punish us. He wants us all to be saved, and has made the way so easy for us that all may go to heaven. But I have told you that nothing unholy can live there. If our souls are wicked, impure, and bad, how can they go where every thing is pure and good? They would not be happy in heaven, they could not be. Bad people never like to be with good people here on earth, and bad souls could not live with good ones, so they must go where every thing is bad like themselves.

But no souls *need* be bad.

"Why," you say, "we are often bad!"

Yes, I know you are often naughty; every body is naughty once in awhile. But you need not stay so. After a little

while, don't you feel sorry? I do not know you, but I think you do. When any one feels sorry for having been bad he repents. Sorrow for sin is called repentance. If you sin and are sorry, then ask God to forgive you for Jesus' sake, and *he will.* If you are forgiven, then that sin is blotted out. You see you need not stay bad.

I do not mean that if you are afraid of being punished, and just kneel down and rattle off a prayer without thinking about it, that you will be forgiven. You must really and truly feel sorry, and be very much in earnest when you pray, and remember how the Lord Jesus died that that very sin of yours should be forgiven. Beg him to teach you to be more like him, for you know he never sinned, and

when you ask God to forgive you, say, "for Jesus' sake." Nobody has ever prayed in this way sincerely without forgiveness. God always hears the prayers of those who ask in Jesus' name.

So, you see, if any soul is kept from heaven it is because it did not want to be pure and good, and never asked God to make it so. He has made the way to heaven very easy for us.

Our dear Lord Jesus is the Way. Merciful, loving, and tender, he is always ready to help us. Do not think because you are little that he does not notice you, for he knows all about you, all your thoughts and wishes, all your faults and sorrows, all your joy and all your repentance.

If you ask him to he will lead you

through life so gently, so tenderly, just as a shepherd leads his sheep, carrying the little weak ones in his bosom. Is this a God to be *afraid* of? No, dear children, for God is Love.

V.

THE TONGUE.

"And touched his tongue."—MARK vii, 33.

IN the four chapters I have already written for you, children, I have told you about being kind, about praying, about praising God, and about fearing him. Now, in praying, and praising, and worshiping we make use of a very little member. Do you know what it is?

The tongue? Yes. It's a little thing, is it not? And yet, do you know it is about the most important thing in the whole world? How should we get along without our tongues? Very badly, I

think, you'll all agree. But how would other people get along without *our* tongues! O, that's the thing to think about!

Chatter, chatter, chatter, go the little red things all day long in children's mouths, until mamma says, "O dear, little ones, *can't* you hold your tongues just a little while?" No, they can't. They try, maybe, for a few minutes, but then—chatter, chatter, chatter, they go again, and never stop till night comes and the little mouths and eyes are closed in sleep.

Now the great question is, what is all this chattering about? How have the tongues behaved themselves? Have they spoken kind, loving words all day long, or have they said sharp, cross, angry things?

Have they thanked God for his goodness, or have they dared to take his holy name in vain? Have they spoken the truth always, or have they told lies?

The same tongue can do all these things.

Suppose that every night when we went to bed we had to have a sharp thorn run into our tongues for every naughty word it had said all day long. O dear! O dear! wouldn't some of our tongues be like rose-bushes? I, for one, don't like to think about that.

But do you know that cross, angry words prick into our friends' hearts just like thorns, and sometimes, when we are very bad, we have made others' hearts as sore as our tongues would be if they were full of thorns?

Yes, and moreover, if we have dared to lie or to swear, we have wounded our own souls. O! we have pierced them through and through, and they are sick and so sore that nothing but the loving touch of the Great Physician can ever heal them again.

See what mischief we can do ourselves and others by using our tongues. But we can do good, too. A kind, gentle word is as much like the rose as the cross one is like the thorn. We can all bring roses to our friends to make them happy. And when we pray to God, or thank and bless him, that is like sunlight falling on our souls. We all love sunlight and roses better than thorns and sores, I am very sure.

Do you remember that story about the

man who had an impediment in his speech and came to Jesus to be cured? He was not dumb, he had partly the use of his tongue, but he spoke in such a way as to be very disagreeable to others, I dare say, or perhaps, though he could make sounds, still his words were so indistinct that no one could understand him. Like every one who ever came to Jesus, he was cured. The Bible says that Jesus touched his tongue, and after that he spoke plainly.

What we all want and need is, that Jesus should touch our tongues. Of course, I do not mean in just the way in which he touched that man's, because we know that he is no longer on earth, and we cannot go and see him as that man did and have him lay his hand upon us.

But he is just as truly alive in heaven as he was on earth, and whatever we ask him to do that will make us pure and holy he *will* do, just as surely as though we saw him and he were to touch us really and truly.

If we pray to him very earnestly not to let us sin with our tongues, he will help us and we will grow careful about what we say. If we feel angry all of a sudden, and are just ready to say something wicked, O, in that moment, if we could only remember to say, "Dear Lord Jesus, touch my tongue," that wicked word would not be spoken. It only takes a moment to pray—the thought, as it passes through our hearts like a flash, is a prayer, and one that is heard. I do not mean that if we were to say those words

without truly feeling them that they would be prayer.

For here is a singular thing. Although it is capable of doing so much good and so much harm, the tongue is a silly, weak little thing, and can't do either good or harm all by itself. It acts just as the soul tells it to act; it is servant to the soul. If the soul is wicked, the tongue is wicked; if the soul is pure, the tongue is pure; if the soul is weak, the tongue is weak.

Don't you know when the doctor comes to see you when you are sick he always asks to look at your tongue? He can tell by its appearance what is the matter with you. If it looks one way, he says you have got the measles; and if it looks some other way, he says scarlet fever, or indi-

gestion, or something else with a long name. This is because the tongue is a regular tell-tale! It tells what is the matter with the body. By looking at it the doctor can tell what ails you.

But it is by *hearing* it that others can tell what is the matter with the soul. Listen to that boy in the street, how dreadfully he is swearing! O, his soul is very, very sick, and his tongue tells it. Is it so sick, I wonder, because it has never been cared for by dear friends? Maybe. For souls and bodies both get sick for want of care. I hope some one will care for that poor sick soul! Any one who heard that wicked oath might do so by asking Jesus to touch his tongue.

Now hear that little child tell a lie because it is afraid of punishment! O, that

child's soul is weak! It does not want to be wicked, but it is cowardly, timid, weak. See how the tongue tells what is the matter!

Do you know how those around you can help to strengthen that little soul? By being kind to it, patient, and loving; by being gentle and just, never frightening it with an angry word or an unjust accusation. Children, do you know how much you can do in this way toward keeping others from sin? In time, that weak soul will grow stronger if it is surrounded by love, just as a tender plant grows more and more vigorous if it is kept in the sunshine. Give the little weak souls time and love. This is what their Maker gives them when, sorry and humble, they pray for strength and to be

forgiven for that sin. The Lord touches their tongues; his Holy Spirit strengthens their souls.

But what shall we say of ourselves when, after having known God's love and justice toward us, we say harsh, censorious, bitter, unkind words of others, or ridicule them to bring a laugh from thoughtless lips; when we, by our wicked words, stab an absent friend, or sit looking at one by our side with sunshine smiling on our lips, but an angry cloud in our hearts, and suddenly strike like the lightning with our tongues? What can be said *of* us? Surely, not that we have been with Jesus.

"Never man spake like this man." "And all wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth."

What shall we say of ourselves? Why, that we are miserable sinners. But Christ died for miserable sinners. Then, sighing and looking up to heaven, let us pray for his divine touch.

VI.

REWARD.

"My Father will love him."—JOHN xiv, 23.

A LITTLE boy once went into a toy store to buy marbles; the shopman gave him one too many. He did not discover this till he was nearly home. Then he found out that he not only had one too many, but that the extra one was an agate. Of course, all boys know that agates are worth more than common marbles, and this boy knew he had only paid for the common kind. So it was clearly his duty to take back the agate. He had been carefully taught what was right and

what was wrong, and he had also read a great many books, in which the good boy was always rewarded and the bad boy punished. He reasoned in this way to himself: "I'll take back this agate because it's right to do so, and very likely the shopman will say I can keep it for my honesty. At any rate, he will praise me for being good and honest."

So he hurried back to the store, and arrived there panting and breathless with the haste he made, his cheeks glowing, and his black eyes as bright as gold buttons. "You made a mistake and gave me an agate," said he, handing it to the man.

"O! did I?" said the man, coolly, and taking it from the boy's hand, he popped it back into the drawer and went on read-

ing his newspaper, without further remark.

The boy felt as if somebody had thrown a glass of cold water in his face. He was disappointed, and surprised, and provoked. "He is a mean man!" said he, leaving the store indignantly. "He ought to have given it to me, or at least to have praised me!" And he walked home very much out of temper.

But this circumstance made him think, and, after he had thought for awhile, he made up his mind that life was not like a story-book, and the way to live was not with the idea in our heads that we should be rewarded for doing our duty. If we were to expect to find every one rewarded for doing his duty, we should be disappointed and provoked as that boy was.

For we often see good people suffering, either from sickness, or poverty, or some other cause. I think, in some cases, we are apt to say, "Why! how is that? Such good people in such distress! I thought they never had to suffer."

But stop and think a minute. Suppose that to be honest, kind, and good brought us all the riches of the world—how hard we would try to be so, wouldn't we? All the scamps in the world, instead of trying to cheat, would all be trying to be honest. But why? Because they longed to fit themselves for the holy world they hoped to go to when they left this one? O no, indeed! Not at all! But because they want a good time in *this* world where they now are. If being good will bring them present pleasure, they will be good.

If being bad will do it quicker and better, they will be bad.

Do any of you boys think there is any thing generous and noble in the boy who "swapped off" his jack-knife for your new ball? He wants the ball, you want the jack-knife: that's fair enough. But there's no particular generosity or nobility about that transaction, is there? You wouldn't go home and say, "O, see how good he was! He *gave* me his jack-knife!" No, indeed! You would say, "He got as good as he gave."

On your way through the world, if you met with perfect success, you would love the world more and more; if you gained honor, and wealth, and rank, because you did your duty, you would be well content never to leave so sunny and serene a life

But this world is not all we ought to want. The one to come will be infinitely more bright and beautiful than this. That is what we are pressing forward to. That is what we are fitting ourselves for. If we were content with the pleasures of this world, and never cared for our heavenly home, we should be like the Indians, who were willing to sell all their beautiful country, with its forests and mountains, its streams and hunting-grounds, for a few glass beads, looking-glasses, bright trinkets, and warm blankets. How silly it seems to us, does it not, to exchange one for the other?

Yet we are sillier far if we are content with this world and do not strive for a better. But a good many of us are naturally silly. Therefore, I think it is an ex-

cellent thing that matters are so arranged for us that we do not get quite all we want, and are never entirely satisfied; that if we do right we learn not to expect a reward, and if we do expect one we are disappointed.

There is a higher motive for well-doing than a selfish one. Our Saviour said, "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." This was the object of the Saviour's life—to do always those things that pleased the Father. Jesus is our example in all things. He shows us the way to glorious reward. What is this reward? The love and protection of our heavenly Father. It is no matter whether we receive an earthly reward or not if we have his love. O, that is what no one can describe!

Perhaps you never stop to think what it is to have the love of your earthly father, and yet, if he were taken from you, and could no longer support you—if you had to make your own way in a hard world, working early and late, never taking rest or pleasure, never having a home to come to when you were sick and sad—I think you would remember that father's loving care and long for it and for all the rest and comfort and happiness it gave you.

Well, now, think for a moment what it would be to lose the love of God! No! we can't think of it—it would be too dreadful. To become more and more hopeless, more and more wretched, more and more lonely, till life goes out, and leaves us shuddering alone in the dreadful dark! O the horror, the agony of

being without the love of God! We cannot think of that!

Thank God, we need not, for nothing can separate us from that love.

That love was lonely, that we never need be lonely; it was betrayed, that we might never be forsaken; it was tortured, that we might smile; it was crucified, that we might live. It wore a crown of piercing thorns, that we might wear crowns of light; it wore the purple robe of scorn, that we might walk in white; it endured scoffing, shame, and agony, that we might have joy forever.

Children, *why* should Jesus—why *did* Jesus do all this for us?

Because he loved us.

Now answer this question, Why should we try and do our duty as Christ has

shown to us? I think you will not be long in finding the answer: "Because we love him."

Yes! that is the higher motive I spoke of.

"My God, I love thee, not because
I hope for heaven thereby:
Nor yet because if I love not
I must forever die.
But O, my Jesus! thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear
And manifold disgrace.

"And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,
E'en death itself, and all for one
Who was thine enemy!
Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Or of escaping hell;

"Not with the hope of gaining aught;
Not seeking a reward;
But as thyself hast lovéd me,
O ever-loving Lord!
Even so I love thee, and will love,
And in thy praise will sing:
Solely because thou art my God,
And my eternal King."

THE END.

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